



University of Luton
Education that works

**The Education of Portuguese Children in Britain:
Insights from Research and Practice in England
and Overseas**

Editors

Guida de Abreu

Tony Cline

Hannah Lambert

Department of Psychology
University of Luton

May, 2003

Chapter 5

Teachers' observations on good practice in working with Portuguese students

Hannah Lambert & Guida de Abreu

Summary

In this chapter Hannah Lambert and Guida de Abreu draw upon the analysis of interviews conducted with twenty five teachers to give an overview of the strategies, teaching techniques and adaptations of teachers' conduct adopted to facilitate the learning of Portuguese students. The teachers' interviews were one component of a series of case studies conducted in three primary schools, two secondary schools and one sixth-form college in England. Twenty teachers and three head teachers had English as their first language and worked in British state schools. In addition, two taught Portuguese and had that as their first language.

The analysis of the teachers' interviews revealed a range of approaches that they considered helpful in facilitating the learning of Portuguese students, as for example:

- (i) being aware of the difficulties experienced by Portuguese students;
- (ii) valuing the contribution and identities of Portuguese students;
- (iii) identifying curriculum subjects which facilitate engagement;
- (iv) providing language support across the curriculum, including bilingual support.

These and other examples are discussed in the chapter. It is important to keep in mind that, as the situation of the Portuguese students in English schools varies, no single recipe will fit all pupils.

5.1 Introduction

The problem concerning Portuguese students performing less well than other ethnic background and native counterparts is highly complex and thus needs to be addressed at a number of levels: institutions, schools, classrooms, local Portuguese communities, families and parents. In this chapter we will focus on addressing the problem at the level of the school, mainly on the central role that teachers play in facilitating the academic and identity development of this group of students in schools in England.

This chapter aims to give an overview of the strategies that the teachers try to employ: teaching techniques and adaptations of their conduct that they claim have worked for them. It is important to point out from the start that we are not in a position to recommend particular strategies that will fit the needs of every school. In fact, considering the extent to which the situation of Portuguese students varies it would not be possible to suggest a recipe that fits all.

After describing the teachers and the method used for interviewing them the remaining part of this chapter presents a range of approaches that they told us they find helpful in facilitating the learning of Portuguese students. We start by highlighting the importance of being aware of the difficulties experienced by Portuguese students. Then we consider the importance of valuing the contributions and identities of Portuguese students. Thought will be given to the implications of the subjects taught for the approaches that are or could be utilised. The support provided by individuals other than teachers, for example those of the language development department, will be discussed. Various other strategies or practices employed or proposed by teachers will be briefly outlined.

5.2 The teachers and the interviewing procedure

In total, twenty-five teachers in England were interviewed in the English language and a further six in the Portuguese language. Only those interviewed in the English language will be focused on within this chapter. The interviews were one component of a series of case studies conducted in three primary schools, two secondary schools and one sixth-form college. Twenty teachers and three head teachers had English as their first language and worked in British state schools. In addition, two taught Portuguese and had that as their first language. The teachers selected ranged from the following:

- Primary school teachers
- Secondary school form tutors
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) co-ordinators and assistants

- Primary and Secondary school Head Teachers
- Primary, Secondary school and Further Education level Portuguese teachers

All of the teachers interviewed had had, to some extent, first hand experience of teaching the Portuguese students previously interviewed. This enabled the interviewer to learn from the teacher both about a particular Portuguese student and about his or her overall experiences of and perspectives concerning Portuguese students' learning in British schools. The interviews took no longer than fifty minutes.

The themes explored in the interviews included: the teacher's attitude towards and relationship with Portuguese students; language issues for Portuguese students; educational attainment of Portuguese students; the behaviour and self-esteem of Portuguese students; Portuguese students' perceptions of mainland Portugal or Madeira Island; the situation of Portuguese parents as immigrants; and Portuguese parents' involvement with school. These areas constituted the general outline of a semi-structured interview schedule and were based upon the first stage of the present project (Abreu, Silva & Lambert, 2001). However, most questions were open, and in many cases teachers highlighted other concerns or issues, which if considered relevant, were discussed as thoroughly as possible.

Appendix 5.1 summarises information about the teachers who were interviewed within each school. It indicates their role or position, the subject they taught and the number of years they had been teaching for. Both the teacher and the school names have been replaced by pseudonyms for reasons of confidentiality.

In the primary schools, four teachers were interviewed. The length of time that each had taught for and their experiences of pupils who were learning English as an additional language varied. None, however, had taught for longer than five years. They were either currently teaching or had taught in the past Portuguese students who moved to England from mainland Portugal or Madeira Island.

In the secondary schools, teachers specialised in a variety of subjects (i.e. English, Home Economics, Music, Geography, History). This constituted an interesting component of the analysis. Furthermore, in both secondary schools, EAL teachers

were interviewed. This was especially illuminating as it made it possible to explore the views of individuals whose role was fundamentally linked to the academic and social development of Portuguese students. The teaching experience of those interviewed ranged from less than one to thirty years.

Both of the Portuguese teachers who were interviewed were currently teaching in a number of educational settings - primary and secondary schools and sixth form colleges. Ilda, who was teaching in the latter, had taught for over twenty years. The other Portuguese teacher, Esther, had taught for approximately five years.

Differences between the perspectives of individuals were substantial. Moreover, the ethos, management and general atmosphere within each school varied immensely. Although such diversity was clearly evident, continuity and similarity in the perspectives of participants were also apparent and important to acknowledge.

5.3 Being aware of the difficulties experienced by Portuguese students

It was apparent on analysing the interviews conducted with teachers, that being aware of the needs of and difficulties experienced by Portuguese students was fundamental to any efforts made to improve the situation. Without this awareness, teachers were unable to meet the crucial need for them to:

- (i) explicitly value the cultural heritage of Portuguese students as a means to legitimate their trans-cultural identity and sense of belonging;
- (ii) develop means to support an optimal acquisition of the English language.

An adequate awareness was a prerequisite for attaining a constructive level of empathy with these individuals as well as a substantial understanding of the students' backgrounds.

A number of teachers stressed that they were aware of the difficulties which many Portuguese students were (or they envisaged might be) going through, as illustrated in the following extract:

‘Um, I imagine myself being thrown into a French school and how I would cope. It must be enormously difficult and strange to hear this language going on. I know when I’ve been on holiday, you know sort of not being able to understand and to be expected to be able to cope with the work as well. Um, not just day to day communicating, but having to work as well. It must be an enormous challenge for her.’ (Edith, Secondary School Teacher)

Some teachers also mentioned the importance of having an understanding of Portuguese students’ backgrounds.

‘Because no matter what the nature of the children you are teaching, I mean, you know, different classes have different groups of children who learn in different ways and deal with specific problems. You know, like any school, there are children throughout the school with specific problems of one sort or another and you have to find ways of finding that key...But obviously you’ve got to have some understanding of where these children are from and make the effort to find out you know, their background and where they’re from.’ (Amy, Primary School Teacher)

‘Yes and obviously any records that come with the child are there to help. So we can see the background that they have come from and the levels. You know, do the parents speak Portuguese at home? Are the parents able to help with homework? So, having good background information, I think helps.’ (Edith, Secondary School Teacher)

As expressed in the above extracts, some teachers find that it helps a great deal to acquire as much background information as possible concerning Portuguese students, in particular on any matter that might have implications for their learning. This was reiterated by Ellen in the following extract who felt that more could in fact be made of the opportunity the school is presented with when a Portuguese parent and his or her child visit the school and meet the staff for the first time.

Ellen: Ideally I would like to meet the parent when they come in so that I can get an idea and maybe ask a few questions. I think that is a very very important visit because you have actually got the parent in the school. Now bearing in mind that we sometimes find it very difficult to get parents to come to parents evenings. So we have to make the most of that opportunity. So I think that we should probably make more of that opportunity in terms that the parent should be meeting as many people as possible in the school...I think our entry procedures should be looked at a little bit in terms of making that more of an event as far as the parents are concerned.

Hannah: So how could that be improved?

Ellen: Better communication with the school undoubtedly... Because I find, I really am interested in knowing the educational history and background of the students. Um it can be difficult. Parents, quite often, they want their children to come to this school. Um if they say, "well actually my child didn't go to school much last year because we were moving around", maybe the school won't like it. Maybe the school will say, "oh we're not taking your child if she hasn't been to school all the last year". They don't

know. They might not really know what to expect. So they are going to try and tell you as little as possible actually. But I think it is important to actually tease out as much as you can and about the social circumstances, the background. Who's in the family? All these things are very important. (Ellen, Head of Language Development, Secondary School).

Despite the limitations that problems concerning the communication between the school and the parents of Portuguese students present, Ellen remains aware of the advantages of seizing such opportunities to acquire as much information about the students as possible. This approach has been successfully implemented in Jersey schools with the support of the local co-ordinator of the Portuguese teaching.

On the other hand, Hilary, an EAL co-ordinator explained that the extent to which the teachers within her school were aware of the difficulties experienced by Portuguese students in British schools, varies:

Hannah: What sort of awareness do you feel there is across all teachers overall within this school as far as the situation for Portuguese pupils in British schools is concerned?

Hilary: I think it's generally quite good throughout school. We have addressed some needs and we have done some training. Some staff take it on more easily than others and some find it really quite difficult. (Hilary, EAL Co-ordinator, Secondary School).

It is worth noting here that even though, staff such as Hilary and the head teacher of this school, Frank, were proactive in their attempts to address the problems, as is evident in the above extract, there nevertheless were teachers who remained relatively unaware of the difficulties that Portuguese students experience. Similarly, Sarah expressed her concern that despite the fact that the EAL department in their secondary school distributes relevant information explaining some of the problems, teachers fail to fully acknowledge and take account of their situation.

'...So I think the teachers need a staff development programme...um to be aware. We do try to circulate information, but none of the teachers take that on board.' (Sarah, EAL Co-ordinator Assistant, Secondary School)

Overall, it is apparent that it is imperative that all members of the school community maintain an awareness and appreciation of the difficulties Portuguese students are experiencing and acquire as much background information about these students.

5.4 Explicitly valuing the identities and contribution of Portuguese students

It was striking that those teachers who appeared to have established a trusting and warm relationship with the Portuguese students had made a conscious effort to convey explicitly that they valued the presence and assets of these individuals in their classrooms. For example, Amy, a primary school teacher who had previously worked in a highly multicultural school, summarised her views regarding this in the following extract:

‘I think that apart from the academic side of it – you know, feeling valued and not feeling different because they are not speaking the same language as the majority of the children in the class. So I think feeling valued is a really big one and the fact that you can speak two languages is fantastic. It’s a real...it’s not detrimental and it’s not a disability. I mean, I can’t speak two languages. That’s what I’ve always said to the children. You know, “I can’t speak two languages. It’s a really valuable asset to have.” ...But it’s like any child – if they are feeling confident and they feel a sense of self worth, then they will do well.’ (Amy, Primary School Teacher)

So, for this teacher, showing respect for Portuguese students’ ability to speak two languages was a crucial strategy, as it was one that both enhances the relationship between students and the teacher and also improves the students’ confidence and ‘sense of self worth’. The latter implication is one of particular importance as it addresses a key concern that has emerged from the present interviews: a deterioration in confidence among Portuguese students. Amy here conveyed this message. Her colleague, Rachel, on the other hand, highlighted other means by which the strategy could be implemented. She explained that on some occasions when students have been especially helpful through translating for teachers within the school context they are rewarded a certificate. This is another way that teachers can demonstrate to students that their bilingualism is considered a valuable attribute. Rachel, as illustrated in the following extract, also encouraged the whole class to learn and speak a little Portuguese. This, she claimed benefited the Portuguese children’s ‘position within the class’.

‘You know, I’ve done things like I’ve taught the rest of the class how to say "Good day" in Portuguese and that’s how they answer the register some times. And you know, things like that I bring in and it’s good for the other children and it’s good for their position within the class. It seems to work quite well.’ (Rachel, Primary School Teacher)

Furthermore, the regard felt for the presence and assets of Portuguese students was not only expressed in teachers' individual interactions with these children, but also in some cases through the ethos and management of the school. This is evident in the following from all three members of staff interviewed at Plover Primary school:

‘...part of our ethos is that every child is unique and I think we have to...because we have got such a diverse group of children from ethnic minorities, I think we’ve got to make them feel very much part of the school by recognising and sort of enhancing their own traditions if you like and that they are valuable and we try to ensure that each child has a knowledge and respects the different ethnic backgrounds.’ (Sue, Acting Headteacher, Primary School)

‘I think that it's right from the start in reception, it's very open. They will always talk about where they are from and as you say, I think the children take joy in being able to tell the rest of the class, you know where they come from, you know in the winter it is thirty degrees. In our country, we do this and we do that. It's very open. I don't think the children would feel very worried or embarrassed about where they come from. It's something that's more celebrated than kept quiet and that goes for all the countries.’ (Alex, Primary School Teacher)

Hannah: Um, generally, what do you enjoy about teaching Portuguese pupils?

Beth: Um, I like the fact that they have experiences that they can show me that I don't know about. It gives them a sense of pride in that they are able to talk about their country and they talk about you know their way of life and you know, the experiences that they have had, knowing that many of the other children haven't experienced it. So, I think it's nice to be able to learn from that?

Hannah: Do they do that a lot? Do they talk about Portugal or Madeira?

Beth: Um, yeah, often it is mentioned and they enjoy talking about it especially in Geography lessons...I think that it is not something that the Portuguese has but it is something that the school tries to encourage. (Beth, Primary School Teacher)

That claim by Sue, a head teacher, implies that the encouragement of every member of the school community to value and respect all ethnic backgrounds is a crucial means by which the self-esteem of all minority ethnic students can be improved. Overall both the school ethos and the attitudes of individual teachers regarding the situation of Portuguese students are crucial in ensuring that the specific strategies that are adopted are successful.

5.5 The implications of the subject taught for strategies utilised

It was evident when interviewing secondary school teachers that the subject the teacher specialised in had marked implications for the strategies they employed or

felt unable to utilise. One example of a teacher who had undoubtedly established a very close and constructive relationship with her Portuguese students was Audrey. Audrey was an English teacher at a secondary school on the South Coast. She felt unable to explain why exactly it was that she had been so successful in this way but was clearly of the opinion that when comparing her subject, English, to others such as Science, she was in a position to be able to at least try to understand what Portuguese students were experiencing. For example, she asks her students to write about their own background. This is a task that they will feel able to do and that will, in addition, provide Audrey with an insight into their lives, including perhaps what they had experienced prior to arriving in Britain and what they were going through at the time of writing.

Hannah: And do you think that the relationship is very important between individuals that are coming to this country and...?

Audrey: Oh, hugely. Absolutely and I think that's why it is so important to make sure that you do have somebody that has empathy with these girls. I don't know where I have got it particularly from. Being an English teacher, I suppose you have got a natural empathy for other people. But it's always been to my advantage in a way and to their advantage. You know, we have got on very very well. Well I think, you just haven't got to expect too much of them. They cannot be expected to follow what everyone else is doing. The work has to be especially tailored for them. Having said that, it takes a very experienced teacher when you have got twenty-eight, thirty-five in certain cases, children in front of you, to be able to spend time and take time out with those individual pupils and that is the problem. Um, it becomes easier as they acquire more English, but those are the initial problems that you have that you cannot expect them to deal with. But I still believe that they should be doing something. And my subject is an easy one because I can just make them write about Madeira or Portugal or whatever. Um, whereas if it's a science or Maths lesson, I don't think it's quite as simple as that. I don't quite know how you would get them on your side.
(Audrey, Secondary School Teacher)

Audrey acknowledges the difficulties that teachers in her position encounter. In her view it is a challenge to try to attend to the individual needs of a minority of students while at the same time teaching a class of up to thirty-five students.

Another example of a teacher who felt that his subject was of advantage to him in teaching those from different cultural backgrounds, such as Portuguese students, was Luke, a music teacher at Nuthatch Secondary School.

'It doesn't matter what culture they come from. They have got all the basic elements of music...Music is um...Music is a common thing that anyone can relate to...And the other good thing about it is that it is a good reflection of the self. So if you go

away for twenty minutes and you practice something, it's like a mirror. You can hear yourself improve.' (Luke, Secondary School Teacher)

Luke, therefore is aware that Music as a taught subject avoids many of the restrictions imposed by language barriers. He also suggests that it can act as a form of emotional expression for individuals, such as Portuguese students, who are experiencing difficulties as it is a means by which they can notice an improvement in their learning, regardless of their struggle to grasp a different language, culture and all that is involved in their transition to Britain and coming to a new school.

Similarly, Edith explained that as a Home Economics teacher, she was in better position than most Secondary school teachers to be able to use diagrams and demonstrations to help Portuguese students to understand her subject even when they were at an early stage of learning English. Also, Fiona, a Geography teacher would ask students to draw from their own personal knowledge of a country they come from or know well. This task, being one which Portuguese students are likely to feel able to do, has the potential to enhance the confidence of these individuals as at the least, it is an acknowledgement of their cultural identity.

Overall, the advantages claimed by teachers of subjects such as English, Music, Geography and Home Economics highlight strategies that they felt made a positive difference to the learning of Portuguese students - using non-verbal modes of communication to overcome the language barrier when they were in the early stages of learning English; facilitating the expression of the feelings about their situation; and demonstrating an interest in, and a positive evaluation of, their cultural background, their exceptional personal histories and their unique areas of knowledge.

5.6 Resources and strategies for language support

A crucial strategy that was emphasised by many teachers was to make as much use as possible of any means of support that could be provided by those other than the classroom teachers. This included teaching assistants, support provided by Language Development and English as an Additional Language Departments [EAL], school and

work ‘buddies’ and Portuguese speaking members of staff. The following extracts are from an interview with Fiona who felt very strongly that bilingual support assistants made a positive difference to the challenges teachers faced when teaching students whose first language was not English.

‘If there was extra time in the system to actually have some language learning mentors, or some assistants that would actually help with language...and I have got one girl in year nine who has actually got language support while she is in my classroom which is brilliant because I can actually understand her writing and once she understands, she can write down a lot better and extend a lot her capabilities. I was talking to her through the language assistant and she is actually a lot higher intellectually than a lot of the kids in the class but if you look at her book it's not until she is with her assistant that she can show her capabilities both with her literacy and with her intellect. It would be brilliant if there were more funds for the non-severe – those that are just borderline with language support...The Government needs to find more money for learning support really and not just learning support as in learning difficulties but EALs, English as an Additional Language students as well. It's upsetting because you know that if the support was there, kids could be taken up another level.’ (Fiona, Secondary School Teacher)

‘There isn't enough money to pay the support assistants to do what they need to do in their job. And they've got problems with getting learning assistants in because they get paid so little and yet they basically run this school. It's just something that I feel really like strongly about...And I don't think that enough recognition by most of the teachers is made...I mean a lot of teachers do appreciate them but I know there are teachers that see them as – they are to look after that one kid and to shut that one kid up. You know that might work with that one kid but other pupils need help too. And there are times where I can't be in three places at once and if that learning support assistant can look after those three kids. They're working with three kids. They're only supposed to be working with one.’ (Fiona, Secondary School Teacher)

‘But they [learning support assistants] are really stretched at the best of times and I have numerous lessons where kids are pretty much on virtually full support but for Geography they don't have the support because there have to be some lessons where they don't have the support. The support goes on the key subjects – the subjects where they cause more problems and trying to juggle them all can be quite tricky.’ (Fiona, Secondary School Teacher)

Fiona therefore considered the help of learning support assistants crucial in her attempts to deal with the problems she faced when teaching students whose first language was not English. This utilisation of support is especially relevant to our present concern to identify strategies that address the needs of Portuguese students in British schools, as language barriers have been identified as a key limitation for their learning (as discussed in the previous chapter). We can infer from the above extracts, that although the work of learning support assistants is highly effective, in her experience it is not seen as adequate. Due to time and funding restrictions, this

support is seen as limited. As a result, the priority is for support to be provided in subjects where it is needed the most (such as Science), leaving Geography teachers such as Fiona, to struggle. She suggests that more funding from the Government as well as changes in the attitudes of fellow teachers towards this form of support, would be key strategies that could be employed to aid the learning of students who are not fluent in the English language and thus help teachers who are currently feeling over-stretched. Edith, a Home Economics teacher in another secondary school, felt similarly to Fiona and expressed her concern that the amount of this form of support that is provided is about to be reduced.

Hannah: You're losing some support?

Edith: Yes. I think the system is about to change. Er, whereas at the moment people's sort of English and second language support is...if anything, they could do with more. Because I think that does really help them...Because again we can tell these support assistants what we are hoping to get across. They can then spend that time getting it across to the Portuguese students. When I have got twenty-five in the class, I can't spend the entire lesson trying to get across to somebody who really doesn't understand. (Edith, Secondary School Teacher)

Changes of this kind and the concern that they cause teachers such as Edith highlight the importance of bilingual learning support as a strategy that helps both teachers and Portuguese students.

It was also highlighted in a number of interviews that as well as professional support assistants playing an important role, another strategy that teachers found effective involved ensuring that Portuguese students were in and outside of lesson time, with another student who was either able to speak Portuguese or particularly academically competent and thus an additional means by which they could be supported.

'Um, also make sure that they are with...if they haven't got another Portuguese speaking pupil along side them, then you can also make sure that they have got a very good pupil with them.' (Audrey, Secondary School Teacher)

'But I do think that you know, you need to set up systems in your class. I think it could be a problem. "I don't understand. I don't understand. I don't understand". That could definitely be a problem. So, I try to counteract that by...I've paired them up with work buddies. So, the Portuguese children and any other children that struggle with reading or understanding or anything like that...um, have a work buddy in the class who they always go to. So they can just say, "What does this word mean?" or "can you read that to me." ...So they um, they don't feel that their teachers are frustrated by this constant, "I don't understand. I can't read this and..." (Amy, Primary School Teacher)

Audrey and Amy explained that being paired with a fellow student who was able and prepared to translate and explain some of the class work to a recently arrived Portuguese student was highly beneficial. It was of advantage to these students as these ‘work buddies’ constituted a form of emotional support, as well as aiding the teachers. Amy highlighted that this strategy counteracted the otherwise less desirable message to new Portuguese students that their communication problems were a source of frustration for their teachers. In Warbler Secondary School, it was normal practice to initially place a newly arrived Portuguese student in a class where there was another Portuguese individual to alleviate any difficulties. However, if the new arrival was considered suitably confident, he or she would not be provided with this means of support. It had been found that the latter arrangement has a tendency to result in the student learning the English language at a faster rate. Sarah, working in the EAL department, acknowledged that ‘work-buddies’ have in her experience been highly effective but cease to be so when the Portuguese student becomes too dependent on the person she or he has been paired with.

‘[The Portuguese student might not] make the effort to speak to other pupils, um to engage in the learning in the classroom side because they will rely on the other pupil to help them with their work and communicate for them. Um and the other pupils then assume that the Portuguese pupil doesn't understand. So, they will tend not to bother quite so much and then they will go through the third party as well.’ (Sarah, EAL Co-ordinator Assistant, Secondary School)

Sarah goes on to explain that in this situation teachers may encourage the break-up of the relationship by placing the students in different classes or form groups. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind the potential for this problem to arise whereby a Portuguese student becomes too dependent on a ‘work-buddy’. Nevertheless the support that fellow students can provide newly arrived individuals is a key strategy that can overcome the restrictions imposed by language barriers.

Finally, another strategy that teachers claimed is beneficial is ensuring that a Portuguese speaking member of staff is always available within a school. In Collared Dove Primary School a Portuguese teacher (linked to the Portuguese Department of Education) is present at their school twice a week. Through observing the benefits of

this individual's presence for this limited time, Hilary and Frank felt that a full time member of staff who can speak Portuguese would be valuable.

‘I think that our biggest most positive change would be to have a Portuguese speaker always here...Just dealing with an issue of the child so that it is completely understood and sorted out.’ (Hilary, EAL Co-ordinator, Primary School)

Hilary thought that this individual would crucially be able to translate for, understand and thus adequately support both Portuguese students and their parents. Another reason why both she and Frank felt this would be an especially useful strategy was that a Portuguese teacher had helped them to choose appropriate Portuguese books for the school to buy. This was a task which they had previously tried to do without this help and had struggled, wasting money. In their view there was little doubt therefore that the strategy of always having a Portuguese speaker available was highly recommended but unfortunately due to financial restrictions, mostly not possible. The two other primary schools that took part in this study had Portuguese speaking members of staff including both teachers and language support assistants.

5.7 Other approaches adopted by teachers

In this chapter thus far we have discussed a number of approaches that were adopted by the teachers to support and facilitate the learning of Portuguese students in this sample of British schools. A number of other ideas were also proposed by the teachers interviewed and have been summarised in the table below. These ideas included (i) developing strategies for efficient communication among teachers about the learning of students who have English as a second language, such as follow-up reports on specific students and a school EAL register; (ii) more availability of bilingual materials (books, dictionaries, etc.); (iii) organising homework clubs and drop in sessions; (iv) school trips to promote learning about the new culture and acquisition of associated vocabulary.

Table 5.1: Other approaches adopted or proposed by teachers to facilitate Portuguese students' learning

Approach	Extract
<p>School trips</p> <p>Jonathon felt that Portuguese students would benefit from the school organising for them to take part in school trips. He argued that this would be of particular advantage to the development of their language.</p>	<p>Hannah: Is there anything else that you think could improve their educational attainment?</p> <p>Jonathon: A lot more socialisation outside of school, I think. There doesn't seem to be a lot of trips outside of school.</p> <p>Hannah: With the rest of the group or on their own?</p> <p>Jonathon: As a class or as groups. Having small groups would be great, but the staff just wouldn't be able to do that. But, just getting out of school and going to things and discussing it and getting language going. Vocab does seem to be a bit of a hold up at the moment for the children. (Jonathon, Primary School Teacher)</p>
<p>Circulation of follow-up reports</p> <p>In Edith's experience, when Portuguese students have not long been at school, it aids both teachers and students for a report to be distributed around the school. The teachers of these specific students fill in this form. It highlights progress that is being made, problems that might be arising and overall facilitates an awareness among teachers regarding the specific needs of Portuguese students.</p>	<p>'Um, you know, they come into a new school with a new way of doing things. So, to sort of find out what the problems are...especially with these pupils, after a period of a couple of months, a report is sent around to all subjects to find out how that pupil is getting on.'</p> <p>(Edith, Secondary School Teacher)</p>
<p>Bilingual books and dictionaries</p> <p>Considering the limitations that teachers attempting to improve the situation of Portuguese students confront, it is important to ensure that their plight is alleviated even slightly through the provision of recommended</p>	<p>Hannah: What are the restrictions that are there?</p> <p>Beth: I think in terms of practical resources...When they don't have the English vocabulary, there needs to be dictionaries that have the Portuguese words and pictures as well. Just to have the vocabulary. (Beth, Primary School Teacher)</p> <p>Amy: If they don't understand what to do then, they may be able to...it's finding the right...having lots of visual stimulus and bilingual books and material and</p>

<p>resources, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced (large) Portuguese dictionaries in every (secondary school) classroom that would be otherwise difficult for students to carry with them. • Illustrated dictionaries for young learners • Bilingual books. 	<p>dictionaries so that they are understanding what is expected of them.</p> <p>Hannah: Do you think that those materials make a big difference?</p> <p>Amy: Yeah, definitely. Definitely. I mean it's, it's like with any child, isn't it...just trying to find a way in for them...make sure that they achieve the maximum...their potential. I mean, I know for example, Paulo who joined me just before Christmas. I've got a Portuguese and English very big picture dictionary. It's very visual. Um and it's got categories and it's really bright and colourful and it's been really useful for him because he tries to explain something to me and I'm not quite sure and he'll get the book and show me the Portuguese and there's the picture and the word in English. So, that's been very useful, definitely. (Amy, Primary School Teacher)</p>
<p>Home-work school clubs</p> <p>Beth and Fiona felt that home-work groups and drop-in sessions specifically for Portuguese students would constitute a substantial form of support for these students and would especially help their language development.</p>	<p>‘...I mean, some of the children with these situations at home, attend homework clubs. So they have an English adult with them that can support them with their homework. I think that is another way around to support them with their language barriers.’ (Beth, Primary School Teacher)</p> <p>Hannah: Well what do you think would be most likely to help them the most?</p> <p>Fiona: ...Maybe just having a support room. I mean there are a lot of groups that are set up for people with learning difficulties or general social difficulties. But if there's a room or a group available...if there is a place and kids know that they can drop in there if they want to one lunch time...even if it's not used – if they know that someone is going to be there, I think that would make a difference. (Fiona, Secondary School Teacher)</p>
<p>EAL register</p> <p>Diana highlighted the utility for Portuguese students of an EAL register which enables teachers to be aware of the students that are specifically experiencing problems due to language difficulties.</p>	<p>‘I mean being on the register anyway and speaking another language. I mean hopefully then – everyone then...they have got access to those resources and they have got access to those teachers that will be supporting them at lunchtimes and after school with homework and things like that. I'm sure that is useful for them to know.’ (Diana, Secondary School Teacher)</p>

5.8 Conclusions

Overall, teachers play a crucial role in the emotional and academic development of Portuguese students. The challenges that they are confronted with do not stem solely from linguistic restrictions; the emotional implications of moving to another country and school are often overwhelming for these individuals. During our interviews it was clear that a number of teachers were sensitive to the problems and constantly tried to improve the academic and emotional development of Portuguese students.

Some teachers considered that explicitly valuing the identities and contribution of Portuguese students is crucial. But the starting point was simply to be aware of the situation of these students. Moreover, we learned that the subject that a teacher specialises in has implications for the approaches that can be adopted or are otherwise difficult to utilise. The support provided by individuals such as ‘work buddies’, Portuguese speaking permanent members of staff and those from the Language Development and EAL departments can benefit both Portuguese students, teachers and parents.

When considering the various approaches that teachers in the present sample claimed they use or propose would benefit Portuguese students, it is important to bear in mind that the situation of this group is complex. For example, the types of difficulties experienced by Portuguese students in one school or area of Britain were found to differ from those found those reported by this group in another. It is not appropriate therefore, to identify a single approach that we can be sure will successfully address all the issues. We noted that few of the teachers had received additional training or preparation for the extra challenges they faced. Many would have benefited not just from the additional resources that were often emphasised during our interviews but also from a more systematic approach to communicating and sharing good practice in work with Portuguese students (see also Cline et al. 2002; DfES, 2003).

References

- Abreu, G. de, Silva, T. & Lambert, H. (2001). *Portuguese children in British Schools: England and the Channel Islands*. Report of the First Stage of the Project. Department of Psychology, University of Luton.
- Cline, T. Abreu, G., Fihosy, C., Gray, H., Lambert, H., & Neale, J. (2002). *Minority Ethnic Pupils in Mainly White Schools*. London: DfES - Department for Education and Skill
- DfES - Department for Education and Skills (March, 2003). *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils*. London

Appendix 5.1: Details of the teachers interviewed

Teacher	School Pseudonym	School Location	Role/ Position in school	Subject taught	Number of years in teaching
Jonathon	Puffin primary school	London	Classroom teacher	Primary level (year 2)	6 years
Esther	Puffin primary school	London	Portuguese teacher	Portuguese language	2 (in current position)
Alex	Plover primary school	London	Classroom teacher	Primary level (year 2)	3 years
Beth	Plover Primary school	London	Classroom teacher	Primary level (year 2)	4 years
Sue	Plover Primary school	London	Acting head teacher	Primary level	13+ years
William	Nuthatch Secondary school	London	Secondary school teacher/form tutor	Science	5 years
Luke	Nuthatch Secondary school	London	Secondary school teacher/form tutor	Music	4 years
Terry	Nuthatch Secondary school	London	Secondary school teacher/form tutor	Art	16 years
Alice	Nuthatch Secondary school	London	Secondary school teacher/form tutor	History	6 months
Fiona	Nuthatch Secondary school	London	Secondary school teacher/form tutor	Geography	3 years
Diana	Nuthatch Secondary school	London	Secondary school teacher/form tutor	Geography	3 years
Ellen	Nuthatch Secondary School	London	Head of Language Development Department	EAL teacher	8 years
Laura	Nuthatch Secondary School	London	Secondary school teacher/form tutor	Art	12 years
Peter	Nuthatch Secondary School	London	Head Teacher	English (previously)	30 years
Toby	Nuthatch Secondary School	London	Language Development Assistant	EAL teacher	9 years
Ilda	Eagret Sixth Form College	London	Portuguese Teacher	Portuguese	21 years
Amy	Collared Dove Primary	South Coast	Primary school	Primary level	3 years

	school		teacher	(year 2)	
Rachel	Collared Dove Primary school	South Coast	Primary school teacher	Primary level (level 2)	1 year
Frank	Collared Dove Primary school	South Coast	Primary school Head Teacher	Primary level	20+ years
Hilary	Collared Dove Primary school	South Coast	EAL Co-ordinator	English language	12 years
Edith	Warbler Secondary school	South Coast	Secondary school teacher/Form tutor	Home Economics	<i>Unknown</i>
Pierce	Warbler Secondary school	South Coast	Secondary school teacher/Form tutor	Geography & Religious Education	<i>Unknown</i>
Audrey	Warbler Secondary school	South Coast	Secondary school teacher/Form tutor	English	<i>Unknown</i>
Sarah	Warbler Secondary school	South Coast	English as an Additional Language (EAL) Co-ordinator Assistant	English language (general support with all secondary level subjects)	1 year
Jill	Warbler Secondary school	South Coast	Acting head teacher	<i>Unknown</i>	One term